

PRESIDENT WILSON AND THE COMING PEACE...1917

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PRESIDENT WILSON AND THE COMING PEACE

By

HORACE J. BRIDGES

Leader of the Chicago Ethical Society.

"When your acts shall correspond to your words, and virtue shall sanctify your life, as liberty has sanctified your intelligence; when you are united as brothers and believers, . . . and they say of you amongst themselves: 'These men are a living religion,' think you your appeal to the masses will not meet with a ready response? Think you that the palm of that world-initiative, sought for by all and destined to benefit all, would not speedily become yours?"—MAZZINI.

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PRESIDENT WILSON AND THE COMING PEACE*

BY HORACE J. BRIDGES

I

BEFORE entering upon this theme, which I have only undertaken to discuss out of deference to the request of some of my hearers, it is right that I should be allowed a word of personal explanation as to my attitude towards political parties in this country. Not being as yet an American citizen, I am neither a voter nor an adherent of any distinctively American party. By tradition and by personal conviction, as it happens, I find myself farther removed from the fundamental principles of the Democratic party (if I understand them aright) than from those of any other national group. If, then, you find that this discourse is for the most part in praise of President Wilson's attitude towards the issues of the war, I must request you to recognize that I have no ulterior motive of party loyalty, and that, so far as I can judge myself, my attitude towards him is as impartial as the attitude of any man who has lived for a few years among you can be.

But there seems need to add that the issues of foreign policy—and especially issues of such gravity as those connected with the war and America's conduct in relation to it—cannot and ought not to be made party questions. When we elect a President, we elect an official who stands, and who must perforce be taken and acknowledged by all of us to stand, in his dealings with the rest of the world, for “nothing less” (in Edmund Burke's phrase) “than whole America.” Foreign policy, bargains and understandings with alien Powers, treaties, diplomatic agreements and conventions, assertions of our rights, protests on behalf of others—all these things commit the nation: not the President who makes them, nor the party which he leads, but the nation. They are permanently binding upon us; and the Executive officer who in our name assents to them acts as the

agent of his political opponents as well as of his supporters. Party divisions end at the frontier. Beyond that, we and those who decide for us are no longer Republicans or Democrats, but Americans. We must remember this when we choose our representatives, and not afterwards complain of what we should have foreseen and provided against. The nation acts, and must act, as a responsible spiritual unity, upon whose constancy in its policy and loyalty in its undertakings the rest of the world has a right to count, and will count. It is therefore a deadly folly (to use no graver term of censure) for critics filled with the animus of party to condemn and repudiate the acts of our Government upon matters of foreign policy with the same freedom and detachment as they display in reflecting upon home affairs. The only alternative to a consistent and continuous foreign policy is the abdication of our status in the world, and the confession that democratic institutions incapacitate a people for that unity of principle and of action through which alone a nation can function in world-politics and make its ideals contribute to the ascending effort of collective humanity. Other nations, not isolated as we vainly imagine ourselves to be, have learned this by experience. It is a maxim in Europe that foreign affairs are not to be regarded as party questions, nor discussed in the Legislature otherwise than as matters the main principles of which are common ground, accepted by all sides. To this stage of national development we have come in fact, and must make up our minds to rise in practice; and possibly we shall do well to begin by imposing this rule upon those ex-Presidents of the United States who at present seem unaware that patriotism and honour require them to live up to it.

It is not ironical to speak of “the coming peace” with the shadow of war hanging

*A Discourse delivered before the Chicago Ethical Society on Sunday Morning, February 11th, 1917.

over us. Although we do not know whether we may not be at war before this hour is out, it still behooves us to think and plan for what lies beyond the strife. The fruits of the maxim, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*, are being gleaned, a ghastly harvest, in Europe. Of all deadly half-truths, surely that is the deadliest. Experience by now has enforced, even upon the most unwilling and incredulous, the lesson that the only way to bring peace and perpetuate it is to prepare for peace.

If, by hard fortune, America must enter the war, still we need not fear that the peace, which must come some day, will be postponed; rather it is probable that our participation will bring it nearer. Not that upon such a matter I should wish to express a view that might be described by the abusive epithet "optimistic." I shall not venture the prophecy that peace will come this year; for I have given up the idle habit of making my own hopes the measure of probability. All that I will venture upon is the proposition that within, say, the next ten years a Conference will gather, whose proceedings and decisions will inaugurate a new epoch in human affairs. It will be an event of incomparably greater importance to the world than the establishment of this country's independence, or than any epoch in the fortunes of any single nation ever was or could be. Accordingly, we shall do well to prepare our minds for that gathering, to watch closely the stages by which it is approached, and to think out the principles by which its decisions ought to be animated. To the conduct of war we, as laymen, are unequipped for contributing any counsel worth attention. But it may be that, as students of history, as people nursed in the atmosphere of democracy, and as inheritors of the traditions of freedom, we are not quite incompetent to judge of the principles and to express the spirit which must guide the coming Peace Conference, if its work is to be beneficent and lasting.

II

The Address delivered by President Wilson to the Senate on January 22nd should not be studied in isolation. Not only must its contents be considered, but also its pur-

pose and effect as a move in the game of chess which was inaugurated by the German Chancellor in the speech he made at the Reichstag on the 12th of December last. One must glance over the whole course of that game, and keep each of the former moves in mind, in order justly to appraise this last one by Mr. Wilson. My preparation for addressing you to-day has been to re-examine, consecutively, these various moves; to study the text of the successive diplomatic pronouncements, and from the mass of verbiage to endeavour to extract the gist, the few salient words; and so, before attempting to analyze the President's weighty utterance, I must sum up the results of my investigation. If one could but forget for a moment the intolerable magnitude of the stakes, it would be an intellectual delight to follow the strategy of the game.

The opening move by the German Chancellor was scarcely a felicitous one, if we are to believe that his ostensible object was his real object;—an assumption, however, which it is never safe to make in contemplating the manœuvres of diplomacy. One is tempted to say, indeed, that in proposing peace the Chancellor did his best to ensure the refusal of his overtures, by telling the Reichstag that Germany *as victor* was magnanimously offering terms to defeated enemies. With unaccountable obstinacy, the Entente (like the ladylove of Mr. Venus) has refused "to regard itself, or to be regarded, in that bony light." No matter how advantageous the terms Germany may have had it in mind to offer, the Chancellor must have known that his opponents would reject them if the acceptance of the offer implied the admission, in any form whatever, that Germany was the victor and her opponents the vanquished.

But the world was given no chance to judge of the magnanimity of Germany's terms, for the Note which the Chancellor addressed, through the neutral nations, to the Entente Allies contained no statement of them; only the bare offer of a conference. It laid down, however, the following principles:—

(a) That the Central Powers went to war "to defend their existence and the freedom of their national developments";—admitting, apparently, by implication, that no other kind of war would have been justified.

(b) That "respect for the rights of other

nations is in no way incompatible with legitimate interests."

(c) That the Central Powers "did not seek to shatter or annihilate their enemies." (This last admission must be borne carefully in mind, as having a special importance at a later stage of the argument.)

The next move, in logical (though not chronological) order, is the speech which the British Prime Minister, Mr. David Lloyd George, delivered in the House of Commons on December 19th. In this address, amid a plentiful display of the stage lightning that seems to be considered requisite to such occasions, he stipulated for "complete restitution, full reparation and effectual guarantees." By way of warding off the demand for a statement of terms from the Allies, he said: "We will wait until we hear what terms and guarantees the German Government offer, other than those, better than those, surer than those, which she [Germany] so lightly broke."

It is impossible to study the progress of this game of chess by taking the moves precisely in the order of time. Mr. Lloyd George on December 19th was obviously replying to the Chancellor's speech of December 12th; and the next development which we must consider is the official reply sent by the Allies, through the neutrals, to the Chancellor's Note. But on December 18th had come the "identic Note" from President Wilson to all the belligerents, requesting that they express to him their views as to terms for ending the war and for arrangements to guarantee the world against its renewal, and against the occurrence of similar conflicts in the future. Before looking into this Note and its results, however, we must recall the terms of the official reply to Germany's request for a conference. The salient points in that document are the following:—

(a) "A mere suggestion, without a statement of terms, that negotiations should be opened, is not an offer of peace." The Allies declare that it is merely a war manœuvre, intended to reconcile German public opinion to a continuance of the struggle, and to divide public opinion in the Allied nations.

(b) "No peace is possible so long as they [the Entente Powers] have not secured reparation for violated rights and liberties, the recognition of the principle of nationalities and of the free existence of small States; so long as they have not brought about a settlement calculated to end once for all forces which have constituted a perpetual menace to the

nations, and to afford the only effective guarantee for the future security of the world."

In short, the German offer was rejected; but the door was carefully left open for a renewal of it, without loss of dignity, whenever Germany felt ready to accompany such renewal with an outline of her terms that might serve as a basis of discussion. The objection to an entrance upon negotiations without a previous statement of principles and conditions was pointedly expressed in the speech by Lloyd George, already cited, when he declared that for the Allies to accept such an offer would be equivalent to putting their heads into a noose, with the rope's end in the hands of Germany.

III

Now in the "identic Note" of President Wilson, dated December 18th, requesting from both sides information as to terms and guarantees, occurred that famous reference to the identity of aims between the contending Powers which gave rise to so much embittered rhetoric. The reproaches, however, were due entirely to a misunderstanding; and this (so far as the Entente Allies were concerned) was practically admitted in their official reply. When they were told (or thought they were told, for they actually were told nothing of the sort) that their objects were identical, both sides chose to consider themselves insulted. But President Wilson, as it happens, is an exceptionally alert and subtle thinker, and an unsurpassed performer upon that wonderful instrument of thought, the English language. What he had said was *not* that the objects of the belligerents were identical, but that, as stated by themselves in general terms, they *seemed* to be so. Hence his request for a show of hands, that the neutral world might have an opportunity of discovering wherein the irreconcilable difference (if any) lay. The elaborate misunderstanding of this perfectly plain and obviously reasonable argument forewarns us against a similar misunderstanding of an equally clear and rational contention in a later utterance by Mr. Wilson.

Meantime, we must fix our attention somewhat closely upon the important document in which the Entente Allies complied

with his request,—bearing in mind, while doing so, that they are the only belligerents who have attempted to do what he asked. It is to be noted that the Allies first admit that the "assimilation" by Mr. Wilson between the avowed aims of the two sides was "based upon public declarations by the Central Powers," though they of course deny that these declarations had "any support in the acts" of those Powers. This is a clear proof that the hubbub of angry criticism of the President was all false and foolish, since he had never said anything but what is here officially admitted to be the fact. The Allies then proceed to offer the following statement of principles and conditions:—

Their objects in the war will not be made known in detail, with all the equitable compensation and indemnities for damages suffered, until the hour of negotiations.

But the civilized world knows that they imply, in all necessity and in the first instance:—

The restoration of Belgium, Servia and of Montenegro, and the indemnities which are due them.

The evacuation of the invaded territories of France, of Russia and of Roumania, with just reparation.

The reorganization of Europe, guaranteed by a stable régime, and founded as much upon respect of nationalities and full security and liberty of economic development which all nations, great or small, possess, as upon territorial conventions and international agreements suitable to guarantee territorial and maritime frontiers against unjustified attacks.

The restitution of provinces or territories wrested in the past from the Allies by force or against the will of their populations.

The liberation of Italians, of Slavs, of Roumanians and of Tcheco-Slovaques from foreign domination.

The enfranchisement of populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Turks.

The expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire, which has proved itself so radically alien to Western civilization.

The intentions of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia regarding Poland have been clearly indicated in the proclamation which he has just addressed to his armies. It goes without saying that, if the Allies wish to liberate Europe from the brutal covetousness of Prussian militarism, it never has been their design, as has been alleged, to compass the extermination of the German peoples and their political disappearance.* That which they desire above all is to ensure a peace upon the principles of liberty and justice, upon the inviolable fidelity to international obligation,

* Note particularly this echo of the German statement, that the object of the war is not to shatter or annihilate the enemy.

with which the Government of the United States has never ceased to be inspired.

This document, as in the circumstances was to have been expected, is ambiguous, or rather elastic, as regards the details of settlement, though generally clear as to principles. Lest it be complained that the Allies are more cryptic than the Central Powers, I would point out that the German statement of justification for the war is the most Bunsbyan oracle ever promulgated. The Central Powers are fighting, says the Chancellor, "to defend their existence and the freedom of their national developments." Under this latter head nobody can say what is meant, for the simple reason that anything and everything may be intended. "Freedom of national developments" may connote simple security against territorial aggression and access to markets on the same terms as the rest of the world; on the other hand, it may mean the absorption of surrounding countries, and the acquisition of supreme control over the highways of commerce by sea and land;—in short, anything whatever, from domestic tranquillity to the establishment of an iron-fisted world-empire. There can be no complaint of ambiguity in the Allied statement from the authors of this comprehensive formula; or, if there be, an obvious answer would be that the Allies were ready to elucidate their document in exchange for an authoritative interpretation of the German rune.

Now, the terms of the Entente *may* mean that Constantinople, for example, is to be ceded to Russia, or they may mean that the Dardanelles and the Hellespont shall be neutralized, internationalized, and made a common highway. Again, the phrase about territories "wrested in the past from the Allies by force or against the will of their populations" does not necessarily imply the retrocession of the whole of Alsace and Lorraine to France. It is clearly open to the construction that "the will of their populations" shall be the determining consideration. The apologists for Germany always contend (a) that a large part of the territories in question is Teutonic in population, and (b) that these provinces were wrested from Germany by force in the XVII century. Setting aside the trifling objection that the latter argument for their

retention by Germany would equally prove that the United States ought to be governed by Britain and that German and Austrian Poland ought to be given up, the insistence on the Teutonic population of Alsace-Lorraine invites the offer of the liberal construction of the Allied formula: the will of the population shall determine, by free referendum vote, the sovereignty under which they are to live. Those portions of the provinces which by a clear majority vote for Germany shall be retained by Germany, the dissentient minority being given a fair opportunity of migrating to the French section; those portions which by a clear majority choose French citizenship shall be re-annexed to France, the dissentient minority being given a fair opportunity of removal to the German section. Such a settlement, ideally just in principle, would be perfectly consonant with the stipulation of the Entente.

Again, "the liberation of Italians, of Slavs, of Roumanians and of Tchecho-Slovaks from foreign domination" might mean the setting up of a dozen or so of small independent States, or a wholesale annexation of Austrian provinces by other nations; but it may equally mean the establishment of local autonomy for these groups, and their proportionate representation, within a federalized Austrian Empire or Commonwealth. In the British Empire, for example, the Boers, the Welsh and the Scotch are in no wise under foreign domination, any more than the Swedish and other national groups in the United States are. The setting up of home rule in Ireland will liberate the Irish from such "foreign domination" as they now endure, but will not involve the detachment of Ireland from the British Commonwealth. Who then can say that a similar basis of freedom under federalism would be inconsistent with the Entente's demand? The expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire is a perfectly uncompromising condition, as to the wisdom and justice of which the judgment of civilization may be divided, but will certainly not be unanimous against the Allies. The phrase about "the *enfranchisement* of populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Turks," however, has the same convenient vagueness that we have noted in other paragraphs of this document. It may mean

complete independence, or something short of it—e. g., Turkish citizenship under international surveillance and guarantees.

As to the reorganization of Europe, that is inevitable in some form; and what objection can there be to the basis proposed by the Allies—viz., full security and liberty of economic development for all nations, great and small alike, in addition to territorial conventions and international agreements guaranteeing the security of frontiers?

Such ambiguities and elasticities in diplomatic documents are, in plain fact, unavoidable. "Last words" and "irreducible minima" would be appropriate at the end of a conference, not in a statement of the principles by which a conference is to be governed; and *that*, be it remembered, is what President Wilson asked of the belligerents, and what the Allies in this Note are presenting. Seeing that, without openly affronting their own extremists, the Entente governments have produced a statement clearly susceptible of a liberal construction, we cannot deny that their reply to Mr. Wilson is a masterly move in this great game of chess. It has, moreover, the immense prestige of being the only reply forthcoming. No statement of terms in any shape has been received from Germany. The position of the Central Powers at present is: (a) that no terms shall be submitted until the Conference opens; and (b) that the Conference shall be limited merely to *the ending of the war*, the question of guarantees for future peace, international co-operation and disarmament being reserved until later.

The German Government has thought fit to describe the Allied reply to its own offer as insulting, and to assume that this answer to President Wilson means the dismemberment and political annihilation of the Central Powers. The German Foreign Minister, indeed, seizes upon the latter document as a justification of the withholding by Germany of any indication as to her terms. He places this on the singular ground that, in view of the "ambitious programme" outlined by the Allies, "the firm and moderate German terms of peace would be taken as an indication of weakness." Upon this, we may be content to repeat the quietly crushing comment of the *Springfield Republican*: "Can we match in history

this paradox of a belligerent thwarted in making peace because it demands too little?"

Recapitulating the moves thus far, then, we find that there has been: (a) Announcement by the German Chancellor to the Reichstag that the victors (the Central Powers) had decided to offer peace to the vanquished; (b) German Note containing the unconditional offer of a conference; (c) foreshadowing by Lloyd George of the Allied refusal; (d) Allied reply, declaring that no offer would be accepted unless accompanied by a statement of principles and an outline of terms; (e) identic Note by President Wilson, stating that, inasmuch as the objects avowed by both sides seemed identical, an outline of conditions of peace and guarantees for the future should be communicated to him; (f) reply to this by the Allies only.

Now of the four possible purposes of the German peace move, three at least have failed. It may have been an honest, though blundering, effort to put an end to hostilities; it may have been a move to enlist the neutral world on Germany's side, by thrusting upon the Allies the responsibility for the continuance of the war; it may have been intended to divide opinion in the Entente countries, by inducing their liberals and pacifists to combine in a great plea for peace; and it may have been designed to impose upon the German and Austrian peoples, by making them believe that a fair peace offer had been refused by their enemies. Its effect in this last direction cannot be estimated by us; but if any or all of the first three motives animated its initiators, it has been a total failure. It has not succeeded in putting the Allies in an embarrassing position with the neutrals, it has not increased the sympathy of the neutrals with Germany, and it has not weakened the Allies by dividing their nationals.

IV

The next and greatest of the series of moves was the Address delivered to the Senate by President Wilson on January 22nd. As related to those which preceded it, this may be regarded as opening to the Central Powers a way of escape from the diplomatic *cul de sac* in which they were

entrapped. Assuming that their offer had been made in good faith, and allowing for the fact that they considered themselves "insulted," as Zimmermann put it, by the Allies' reply, Mr. Wilson's move provided them with a fresh opportunity of saying to America, with perfect dignity and without danger of being compromised, what they felt it *infra dig.* to say to their antagonists. I do not suggest that this is the most important aspect of Mr. Wilson's Speech; but that it did have some such purpose must be remembered, as throwing light upon certain of its contentions. Nor is it conceivable that the German Government can have failed to perceive this purpose in it, or the opportunity which it opened to them. Why did they not reply? Why did they not say, "We were insulted by the Allies' answer to our offer of peace, and therefore we cannot compromise ourselves, or incur suspicion of weakness, by further parleying with them; but here is a chance for us to put ourselves right in the eyes of the world. Our enemies have submitted to the American President a specious and plausible document. We will trump their trick, by placing in his hands a far more moderate statement of our position and conditions"? Inasmuch as their only response to the President's great programme has been the declaration of ruthless and universal submarine-boat warfare, it seems hard to resist the inference which has been generally drawn,—namely, that Germany in the preliminary negotiations was not acting in good faith with a view to peace.

There is one conspicuous difference between the positions thus far adopted by the belligerents which we must here pause for a moment to consider, because President Wilson's Speech is necessarily very delicate in its allusions to it. This is the question of the work to be done by the Peace Conference. The Allies in their reply insist that the Conference must be entrusted, as a part of the business of ending the war, with the concerting of arrangements to guarantee the stability of its own decisions and the perpetuation of the peace it makes. This is put beyond all doubt by the words of Mr. A. J. Balfour in the supplementary "explanations" he was authorized to make:—

A durable peace can hardly be expected unless three conditions are fulfilled: The first

is that existing causes of international unrest should be as far as possible removed or weakened; the second is that the aggressive aims and the unscrupulous methods of the Central Powers should fall into disrepute among their own peoples; the third is that behind international law, and behind all treaty arrangements for preventing or limiting hostilities, some form of international sanction should be devised which should give pause to the hardest aggressor.

Germany, on the other hand, as we have seen, has proclaimed that such "international sanction" is not to be devised by the Peace Conference, but must wait till later.

Now this difference I take to be fundamental; and it really does look like an evidence of greater sincerity on the part of the Allies than on Germany's. For any mere ending of the war, without the establishment of effective guarantees against its resumption or against the initiation of a fresh war, will leave the world in the same hopeless and helpless position that made the preservation of peace impossible in 1914. The old game of each nation arming against the world, each demanding security against every possible and impossible combination of enemies, will start up afresh, entailing ruin upon ruin for the European peoples, and making a further and a greater war virtually certain within the next forty years. To postpone the inauguration of the World-Federation against war will be to make it more and more difficult with every day's delay. The Peace Conference must find all the Powers ready in good faith to abandon whatever schemes of individual world-dominance they may have entertained, and to pool the control of their forces; for at that Conference their good faith must be proven by their voluntary acceptance of international commitments that will make such designs on their part forever impossible. Liberals everywhere feel that this is the only thing that matters fundamentally. The readjustment of frontiers, the compensation of victims, the settlement of damage-claims between belligerents and neutrals,—all these are as the small dust of the balance beside it.

v

Turning now to the actual contents of President Wilson's Senate Speech, I would ask your indulgence if my analysis of it

should seem unnecessarily elaborate; for, while it is in every man's hand, I question whether the public at large has thus far begun to realize its historical and world-molding importance. Upon documents like Magna Carta and the American Constitution we have been willing to bestow endless scrutiny and to write and study whole libraries of commentary. Inasmuch, then, as in my deliberate judgment the President's recent utterance means as much for the future of mankind as either of these, and will be ranked by history as upon a par with them, I feel that we should accord to it at least a short measure of the closest attention.

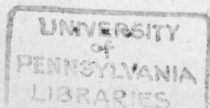
1. Mr. Wilson begins by admitting that his request for a statement of peace terms had elicited from Germany no answer whatever, whereas the Entente Powers had replied "in general terms, indeed, but with sufficient definiteness to imply details"; and therefore we are to that extent nearer to "a definite discussion of the peace which shall end the present war."

2. He hints at the radical nature of the task awaiting the Peace Conference, and of the share in its work that will devolve upon America, by declaring that it will have "to lay afresh and upon a new plan the foundations of peace among the nations."

3. In such an enterprise it will be both the right and the duty of the United States to participate. Its history and polity have from the first been preparing it "to show mankind the way to liberty." Such a service it cannot now withhold; but it owes it to itself and the world to state the conditions upon which it will feel free to render it. The settlement cannot be long postponed; and this Government therefore offers now the conditions upon which it will give its formal and solemn adherence to a league of peace.

4. The peace must be one that shall satisfy all mankind—not the present belligerents only; and, although America cannot dictate its conditions, it can help to determine whether it shall have the lasting nature of a universal covenant.

5. This is the case, because, in order to be so guaranteed, it must include the peoples of the New World; its terms and conditions, therefore, must satisfy them, in being consistent with their political faith and practical convictions.



6. Not, indeed, that any American Government would seek to prevent any settlement between the contestants; but "mere terms of peace between the belligerents will not satisfy even the belligerents themselves." (Here the President seems to be rebuking the German contention that the question of guarantees must not be included within the purview of the Peace Conference.) The peace *when made* must be made secure by "the organized major force of mankind."

7. Whether such a guarantee can be secured depends upon the nature of the war, and of the peace which is to ensue. Is it a war for lasting peace, or only for a fresh balance of power? In the latter case, it cannot be guaranteed and cannot be permanent. But, "fortunately, we have received very explicit assurances" from both sides that it is not a struggle for power.

8. Here we reach the crucial point in Mr. Wilson's Speech; the point, too, upon which he has been most mischievously misunderstood. It has been assumed that he laid down, merely as his own opinion or as the American view, that "it must be a peace without victory." Now, his opinion to that effect would have been interesting and important, and would at the same time have constituted a fair target for the criticism of those who dissented from it. But what he actually said was far more weighty, far more fraught with hope for the world, than any personal opinion, or even any conviction of the American people, that he could have uttered. What he says is, in effect, that *the statesmen of Europe, the authorized spokesmen of the belligerent Powers themselves, have made admissions which can only mean that they are seeking peace but not seeking victory.* This statement will prove itself to anyone who will read the President's own words, weighing especially those that I have italicized:—

Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace or only for a new balance of power? If it be only a struggle for a new balance of power, who will guarantee, who can guarantee, the stable equilibrium of the new arrangement? Only a tranquil Europe can be a stable Europe. There must be not a balance of power but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace.

Fortunately, *we have received very explicit assurances on this point. The statesmen of both of the groups of nations now arrayed*

against one another have said, in terms that could not be misinterpreted, that it was no part of the purpose they had in mind to crush their antagonists. But the implications of these assurances may not be equally clear to all, may not be the same on both sides of the water. I think it will be serviceable if I attempt to set forth what we understand them to be.

They imply, first of all, that it must be a peace without victory.

Could language be plainer? He could not have said more clearly than he has here said, "I am merely reducing to explicit terms the diplomatic verbiage of the spokesmen of the warring nations. When they say, as they have all done, that they do not seek to crush or annihilate their opponents, but are simply fighting for the right to live and grow, this means, and can only mean, that there must be peace without victory."*

9. This implies, says the President (still interpreting the utterances of the belligerent statesmen, and drawing out what is involved in them), that it must be a peace between equals, "a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit." And why? Because—a new thing in diplomacy—he recognizes the psychology of the situation: the right state of mind, the right feeling between nations, is as important and necessary as the just determination of questions of territory, race and sovereignty.

10. But in what sense can the nations be "equals"? What kind of equality is possible or desirable? Equality of *rights*, answers Mr. Wilson. All nations, big and small, strong and weak, must be equally safe and equally free; and these fundamental rights must be ensured to all by placing at the service of each, on the same terms, the organized force of the world.

* In the New York Nation of February 1st we find an interesting echo of the President's words in a voice from the trenches. An English soldier, Mr. Lees Smith, a mere corporal from the ranks home on leave, who happens in civil life to be a member of the House of Commons, addressed that body in the following terms: "Some of my friends may think that the notion of a league of nations is Utopian and fantastic. It might be so if we were living in ordinary times, but we are not. We are standing upon the threshold of a new order of the world. . . . If Christian Europe does not now make up its mind to make an end to war, I do not see how civilization as we have known it is to go on. If you try to crush the Central Empires by a military decision, followed up by economic strangulation, you will carry forward into peace the hostilities and hatreds of war; you will make armies, navies and armaments more oppressive than ever; you will make war more inevitable than ever, and you will fasten conscription irrevocably upon this nation and all others."

When there shall be the same danger in attacking Denmark or Belgium as in attacking Germany or Russia,—when any aggressor shall know that his act will let loose against him the force of all the rest of the world,—then the nations can go their way in peace and safety. No other kind of equality is either possible or desirable; this kind is both possible and indispensable.

11. Next come the golden words of this manifesto: "No peace can last, *or ought to last*, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that *no right anywhere exists to hand peoples from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property*." And this, says the President, is not mere theorizing, nor the pressing of what happens to be a peculiarity of American institutions. It is an uncovering of realities. Wherever this principle is recognized and admitted, humanity is free from the curse of war; wherever it is denied in practice (whether admitted in words or not), there can never be assured or permanent peace. The North American Continent is secure from internal disturbance, not because it is less complex racially than Europe, for it is not so; but because this primary right of all mankind is conceded, in reality as well as in profession. To have these words spoken by the responsible head of a great world-power, and backed by the unanimous conviction of a vast nation, is truly a new epoch in the life of the world. To have them advanced not as a fanciful element in a utopian construction, but as the groundwork of an actual programme of world-politics and world-organization, is a greater blessing than any event that ever happened to affect the fortunes of any single nation.

12. On the important issue of the Freedom of the Seas, which is the next point he raises, the wisdom of Mr. Wilson's deliverance is as impressive as its courage. It must, he says, be secured to all, on equal terms. With an eye on the Constantinople problem, he lays it down that "where this cannot be done by the cession of territory, it can no doubt be done by the neutralization of direct rights of way under the general guarantee which will assure the peace itself." For the rest, he says that, no matter how radical the readjustment needed or how difficult the changes may be, the thing

can be done "if the Governments of the world sincerely desire to come to an agreement concerning it."

13. But the issue of the Freedom of the Seas is only a part of the larger problem of the limitation and internationalization of forces, military as well as naval. We are facing the new time, and the entrance into it is by way of a reorganization of the world, which was impossible so long as the will to effect it was lacking, but which becomes possible as soon as its necessity and advantage to all have been proved by experience, and have begotten the universal desire to bring it about. What the President does *not* say in this connection, but what is evidently implied in the whole of his statement, is that the highways of the sea and of the land must be made accessible to all the nations, on equal terms, for every business except that of warfare or aggression. Should any nation in the future attempt those things, the rest of the world will instantly combine to deny it both the freedom of the seas and the freedom of highways on land. This is a necessary implication of the further contention, that for the future statesmen must plan for peace as in the past they have planned for war.

14. In all this, says Mr. Wilson, he speaks not only for himself, and not merely for America; but also for "*liberals and friends of humanity in every nation and of every programme of liberty*." This programme, these policies, are consistent with the traditions and principles of America; but, more than that, they are what justice demands and experience proves necessary for the whole world. He is proposing that the doctrine of President Monroe, interpreted as meaning that every people and nation shall have security for free self-realization, shall be accepted by all the Powers of the earth. "These are American principles, American policies. We can stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward-looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind, and must prevail."

VI

So closes the noblest, the most courageous and the most disinterested utterance ever pronounced by any statesman in the

name and with the authority of a great nation. Opposition to it by Americans (whether ex-Presidents or others) is either a shameful display of party spirit, or else a revelation of motives still meaner. The President does not take sides between the belligerents; he sides with the eternal right against the eternal wrong. He is not uttering liberal sentiments under any fear lest America may suffer at the hands of illiberal foes; he stands as the champion of the oppressed in every land. He has done something far finer than to back the Allies against Germany or Germany against the Allies. He has backed the better self of each against its baser self. He reinforces the liberals among the Allies against the reactionaries; and the liberals of Central Europe against the militarists, the annexationists, and the autocrats. He has given a blow between the eyes to the monstrous, insane and inhuman doctrine (still current in some influential quarters) that kings derive their authority directly and immediately from God and are responsible to Him alone,—a doctrine which in practice has always meant that kings are altogether irresponsible.

Hitherto liberals have looked to this country as the hope of the world; and to the oppressed it has been a beacon-light of freedom, a land of refuge, a strong tower against oppression. America has not always been true to this, her high destiny. But in the main she has; and in foreign policy especially, her tradition has been more honourable and more disinterested than that of any other great nation in the world. While some Americans (like Senator Borah) are incurring the scorn of posterity by stigmatizing these proposals as "criminal folly," the sufferers in the war-

stricken nations are hailing them as a new gospel of hope and joy for mankind. The Pope declares that the Address "has revived the principles of Christian civilization"; and soldiers, Socialists and lovers of freedom everywhere are joining in the chorus of praise and gratitude.

With a dignity, an insight, a grasp of realities and a mastery of language that would do honour to the best-trained professional diplomatists of the Old World, Mr. Wilson has thoroughly fulfilled the duty of America. He has shown to the leaders of men everywhere that they still can count upon the Republic to guide the world to a freedom based on justice. If now we have to go to war, it will be with a clear conscience, and for a defined programme on which the hope of the world is staked. In our breach with Germany we are resisting a demand that we shall resign not only our own sovereignty, but that of the world, into the hands of a lawless aggressor.

These principles, to which the President has pledged us in the sight of all the world, these doctrines for which, if need be, we will fight and die, are the Magna Carta of Humanity, the Declaration of Independence of the World. We cannot too highly rejoice that in so grave a crisis we have found a leader equal to the occasion: one of even peaceful spirit; one with the vision of the idealist and the practical grasp of the trained historian and statesman; above all, one imbued with that highest courage, the courage of utter disinterestedness.

. . . Our battles still are won
By justice for us, ere we lift the gage.
We have not sold our loftiest heritage.
The proud Republic hath not stooped to cheat
And scramble in the market-place of war.
Her forehead weareth yet its solemn star.

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